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## Metis Studies

### *The Development of a Field and New Directions*

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UNTIL RECENTLY, sources for Metis studies have been few both for classroom use as well as academic reflection. Lately, there has been a virtual explosion of interest, although largely among non-Metis historians. Now this too has begun to change. A new dynamic is also forcing Metis historiography out of the bog of Red River in which some argue it has been mired for too long. The writings of the previous decades have already been examined from a historiographical perspective in several excellent articles.<sup>1</sup> Rather than updating these useful exercises, an alternative is to examine the new literature from a topical perspective, posing questions and suggesting new avenues of investigation.

The current literature is the reflection of scholarly concerns of the last two decades and fit into six basic themes or areas: the origins of the Metis people, the historic Metis of the fur trade period of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Metis Diaspora of the mid to late nineteenth century, the revival of Metis consciousness in the twentieth century, Metis land claims, and Metis women's history. A case could be made that the beginning point in each of these areas are the great icons of Metis historiography: W.L. Morton, G.F.G. Stanley, and Marcel Giraud.<sup>2</sup> However, their studies have been well assessed and often reinforce stereotypes, so it is best to look to more recent literature.

#### **Metis Identities and Origins**

Much of the current debate in Metis studies, whether cultural or legal, but particularly those relating to land rights, centres on who is Metis. This interest in Metis identity and origins was in no small way sparked by the work of John Foster. In the late 1970s and 1980s Foster examined, in some detail, the origins of the various Metis communities in the Canadian West.<sup>3</sup> His last essay on this subject, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," goes a long way in detailing the

complexity of Metis origins. Since the 1980s scholars have also begun to investigate the emergence of Metis communities in other parts of North America. These studies enhance our understanding of the complexity of Metis identity and provide some insight as to why some of these communities were so short lived.<sup>4</sup>

Several questions are current with regard to Metis identity and its origins. First, precisely who are the Metis and how are they defined? This question is particularly relevant given the 1982 identification of the Metis as Aboriginal people under the Canadian constitution. At one time, some suggested that only those who could claim ancestry to the historic Metis, that is those from Red River, could claim Aboriginal rights. Where, some asked, would this leave the Saskatchewan and Alberta Metis? In 1983, depending upon the definition of Aboriginal Metis, there could be as many as one-million or as few as one-hundred-thousand Metis in Canada. Second, why do the Metis have a strong collective identity in Western Canada, but only a weak sense of one in Eastern Canada or in the United States? John Foster in his "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problem of Metis" argues rather cogently and with a great deal of common sense that you are Metis if you say you are, and, as important, you are Metis if others who identify themselves as Metis say you are.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately both conditions can not always be met, and from that springs much current conflict. Trudy Nicks in "Mary Ann's Dilemma: The Ethnohistory of an Ambivalent Identity," brings the issues of identity home by examining the very personal dilemma of a Cree Metis woman. She identified herself as Cree, until her material culture was identified as Metis by a Provincial Museum of Alberta curator. She then opted for a new identity. Little has been done with the use of material culture to identify Metis ethnicity, and it is obvious from the Nicks article that while the exercise may have its rewards there will be many pitfalls along the way.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, innovative new work being done in Metis cultural history, much of which still has not been published. The recent work on the Michif language is a good indication of the promise this work holds.<sup>7</sup>

The role of governments in the formation of Metis identity is very evident in the writings Olive Dickason, Jacqueline Peterson, Vern Dusenberry, and David Boisvert and Keith Turnbull. In their article, "Who are the Metis?"<sup>8</sup> the latter two authors focus on the impact of government regulation and law on the creation of a Metis identity. In particular, they attempt to deal with the question of who are the "historic Metis." Can the past and the current identity of the "historic Metis": or those with roots in Red River form a realistic foundation for a new Canadian Metis identity? Where does this leave the Saskatchewan, the Alberta and the Territorial Metis whose roots do not extend there? Yet their point about the importance of government policy in determining identity is worth pursuing, and in fact emerges

in a number of other writings by senior scholars. Olive Dickason argues in her "From One Nation"<sup>9</sup> that the Metis did not emerge in New France because of government policy to assimilate any mixed-bloods into French culture. Peterson also argues in her article, "Many Roads to Red River; Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815,"<sup>10</sup> that if the Metis did find their roots in the Great Lakes area, it was also because government regulation was tempered with isolation. Vern Dusenberry's observation of the American situation in his "Waiting for a Day That Never Comes: The Dispossessed Metis of Montana"<sup>11</sup> may be the most telling. He provides clear evidence that government refusal to recognise the Metis, and the Metis acceptance of the fact, relegated most to the status of Indians. More recent work on the American Metis in Montana and North Dakota adds some complexity to this picture showing how the Metis were able maintain some sense of a separate identity within the context of tribal structures.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Red River Metis**

In the last decade much ink has been devoted to the historic or Red River Metis. The debate is often acrimonious and some might argue not relevant to the Metis situation today. But it is critically relevant because so much of Canada's Metis identity is tied to what happened at Red River. For this reason it is imperative to understand the formation of the Red River Metis and their subsequent dispersal and move into the western interior. One particular event that has been re-examined recently involves what has come to be known as the "Seven Oaks Massacre." This incident, that ended in 22 deaths, only one a Metis, is often cited as the single event that acted as the catalyst that shaped the Metis identity and proved their rights to Manitoba's plains. Even so, until 1992, the incident received little close attention. Lyle Dick in a provocative article, "The Seven Oaks Incident,"<sup>13</sup> argues that the killings were not planned, and that it was to the advantage of the settlers and other Canadians to call Seven Oaks a "massacre." By doing so, they justified the subjugation of the Metis. The word "massacre" confirmed the image of the Metis as a barbaric and savage people. This same image of the Metis as a less than "civilized people" was reinforced by a generation of historians like George Stanley in his interpretations of the 1869 and 1885 rebellions as inevitable clashes between a civilised and primitive society.

Other questions that are being asked by scholars and by the Metis Community include: What was the nature of this society? What caused the society to change over time? In particular, what were the economic and social pressures inside Red River that precipitated the Riel Resistance of 1869? The writings of W.L. Morton, Marcel Giraud, G.F.G. Stanley, Gerhard Ens,<sup>14</sup> Irene Spry,<sup>15</sup> Frits Pannekoek,<sup>16</sup> and Sylvia Van Kirk<sup>17</sup> address these questions. While the particular events of the Riel resistance of 1869 are not

currently subject to much debate, the importance of the resistance in alienating the Metis from the Canadian mainstream is an area to be studied.

The interpretation of the two armed uprisings will always be central to an understanding of the dynamic of the historic Metis. The publication in 1985 of *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*<sup>18</sup> has made it much easier to examine some of the crucial sources related to these uprisings and to evaluate some of the interpretations that have arisen regarding them. The appendix to this volume, by Thomas Flanagan and Glen Campbell, updates this collection including some of Riel's writings that were not included in the published five volumes, as well as providing a commentary to these sources.

The first interpretation of the Metis uprisings was that of George Stanley who saw the Metis as being a half-wild, half-civilised people, incapable of facing the modern world. In his view the Metis resistance and rebellion against the Canadian state in both 1869 and 1885 represented a last stand against racial and economic absorption.<sup>19</sup> W.L. Morton, in his classic interpretation in the introduction to Alexander Begg's *Red River Journal and other papers relative to the Red River resistance of 1869-1870*,<sup>20</sup> believed that Red River was an island of civilisation within the wilderness, and that the Metis were the ultimate expression of the balance that could be achieved between the barbarous and civilised halves of the settlement. Morton argues that the Rebellion of 1869 was an attempt on the part of Red River to secure its dual cultural and political reality within a Canadian Protestant and Anglophone expansion. The causes of the resistance were to be sought not in Red River but in outside forces, particularly the bigotry and racism of the Canadians.

More recently, historians argue that Red River should be explored on its own terms rather than in the dual schizophrenic cultural assessment offered by Morton, Giraud or Stanley. Perhaps the Rebellion was an outward manifestation of a growing social unease within the settlement. I argue in *A Snug Little Flock* that perhaps the mixed-bloods of Red River should not be seen as a monolith, but rather as two communities with two separate identities. The one, the English speaking mixed-bloods, sided with the Canadians, while the French speaking mixed-bloods, the Metis, accepted Riel's leadership against the cultural and racial bigotry of the Canadians and, unfortunately, their own English speaking mixed-blood brothers. This argument has not been widely accepted. The best refutation is by Irene Spry, in her article in *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, who saw the mixed-bloods, regardless of heritage, as united. They were a classless and free society working in complete harmony with nature.<sup>21</sup>

### The Metis Diaspora

More important are the arguments in the recent literature that relate to the great Metis Diaspora, that is the migration and dispersal of the Metis after



the 1869 resistance in Manitoba, and the Riel Rebellion of 1885 in the North-West Territories. A great deal has been written to explain what precipitated the Metis exodus from Red River. Traditional thinking was that it was a result of the callous economics and racism of the incoming Canadians. If this was the case then perhaps much of what Stanley has stated might be true. He argues that the Metis could not cope with the new sophisticated economic environment and that combined with a new virulent racism pushed the Metis further into the interior. Stanley saw 1885 as the end of the Metis nation, the last stand. Even today, historians like George Woodcock second Stanley's interpretation in his biography of the great Metis general, Gabriel Dumont.<sup>22</sup> John Foster and Gerhard Ens argue rather that the situation that precipitated the Diaspora from Red River to the Saskatchewan country and to the United States was more complex. As early as 1850 the Metis had become commodity manufacturers, particularly of buffalo robes for eastern capitalist markets. Both Ens and Foster demonstrate that the Metis were divided into a merchant class and a buffalo-hunting class who worked almost entirely on the production of buffalo hides for the Eastern markets. In turn the Metis were paid in manufactured goods, upon which they increasingly relied.

The Metis then were not pushed out of Red River, rather they were attracted by opportunity to move into the Western interior.<sup>23</sup> Many like Diane Payment now accept Ens's thesis but argue as well that racism and economic hardships imposed by unfair land allocation practices contributed to drive the Metis into the South Saskatchewan area. She notes in her book that the Metis adapted well to their new economic realities and achieved considerable success as farmers, merchants and professionals particularly with the demise of the buffalo.<sup>24</sup> To Gerald Friesen, whose summary interpretations can be found in *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, the Metis had to adapt to a market economy and did so with variable success after 1885.<sup>25</sup> But all accept that the dream of a sovereign Metis Nation ended in 1885.

What is also worth noting is that little has been added to the interpretation of the Riel rebellions over the last few years.<sup>26</sup> There continues to be an interest by military and Parks Canada historians in the battles of 1885, but the precise nature of this event has been relegated to antiquarianism. Some events related to the rebellion have become laboratories for other subjects, including women's studies. But the debate over the Diaspora from Red River has yet to become the foundation for a much more important issue, the emergence of the new Metis consciousness of the twentieth century. The assumption is still that with the end of the buffalo robe trade, the Metis became a peripheral people. The suggestion is that the importance of a people is directly related to the viability of their economic base. The implication is that as the buffalo robe trade became marginal, so did

the Metis. The history of the Metis is too easily confined to the period when they were on centre stage.

### A New Metis Consciousness

The real future in Metis studies lies not in Red River, or in the early North West, rather it lies in determining the roots of the new Metis consciousness of today. These roots can be discerned in the mythology of 1869 and 1885, but more importantly in the 50 years of marginalisation following 1885. Until recently there was not a great deal of material on the Metis from 1885 to the Depression. Enough now exists however, so that the legal process that led to the marginalisation of the Metis in Western Canada can be discussed. More importantly, there is enough critical literature that allows evaluation of the events that led to the formation of the Ewing Commission, the single event that ultimately led to the establishment of the Alberta Metis colonies and to the reassertion of Metis nationalism. In addition, recent literature allows the contribution of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris to the resurrection of that nationalism to be further explored. However, the historiography is still sufficiently fragile that it will need to be nurtured if healthy and critical scholarship is going to emerge in the next decade.

Mike Brogden's "The Rise and Fall of the Western Metis in the Criminal Justice Process"<sup>27</sup> attempts to prove that the Metis were purposely marginalised by the Euro-Canadian manipulation of the criminal justice system in the period following 1885. "Criminality" was a social artefact used to marginalise and segregate the Metis who "hindered the thrust of eastern Canadian and European capitalism." He argues that, regardless of time, the Metis were marginalised or criminalized whenever they attempted to seek their economic freedom. With the defeat of Riel in 1885, Brogden further argues that the Canadian government deliberately used the justice system to criminalize the Metis political and social structures through "vagrancy" and "sturdy beggar" laws. The Metis became a marginalised class, kept in their place through the criminal justice system and used as cheap labour in the new agriculture of the Canadian West.

In a more biographical vein Murray Dobbin's *The One-and-a-Half Men*<sup>28</sup> documents the hopelessness and despair of the Alberta and Saskatchewan Metis after 1885. Dobbin's analysis focuses almost entirely on issues of class and on the intersection of class and nationalism with Metis relations with the state. Dobbin traces the careers of Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady, both middle-class Metis from northern Alberta, who were instrumental in organising the Metis after the Depression and bringing their concerns to the forefront. Throughout their lives, both Norris and Brady urged Metis communities to undertake their own economic development along cooperative lines and to minimise dependence on government. Their ideal was an

empowered community that would determine its own economic and cultural future, collectively and cooperatively. Dobbin argues that the works of Norris and Brady led to the resurrection of the Metis identity and to the creation of the first Metis homelands in northern Alberta and later, northern Saskatchewan. Equally importantly, Dobbin argues convincingly that current day political action and organisation resulted from their work. In so doing, he was one of the first scholars to assign agency to key Metis leaders of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

### Land Claims

The legal relationships of the Metis to the land is linked to their standing as Aboriginal peoples, and will determine their cultural well-being as a nation and their economic well-being as individuals. The troubles in Manitoba in 1869, in the North-West Territories in 1885, and in Alberta in the 1930s all had their origins in land. The similarities and differences between Metis, Non-Status, and Indian rights and claims are now the subject of numerous court cases and this should generate a new spate of studies on Metis scrip, land, and rights to complement the work of D.N. Sprague and Thomas Flanagan.

Considerable scholarship has already been published concerning the nature of Metis "Aboriginal" claims. Do the Metis have the same land claims as Indians or Inuit? Thomas Flanagan concludes that Metis rights are subordinate to those of the Natives and the Inuit. Metis rights flow from Indian claims. Flanagan limits even these unique rights of Western Canada to the old North-West Territories. He believes that no Metis rights exist in the rest of Canada. Flanagan's strongest arguments are marshalled in his *Metis Lands in Manitoba*<sup>30</sup> in which he maintains that when Manitoba entered Confederation, the Metis were British subjects with full civil and political rights. Unlike Indians, they could own land, enter into contracts, vote and hold public office. Flanagan argues that the Canadian Government consciously respected that status when it gave Metis scrip to extinguish whatever Aboriginal title to land they may have had. Scrip was private property, to do with as the Metis wished.

Doug Sprague and Joe Sawchuk, historians for the Alberta and Manitoba Metis federations, disagree with Flanagan. Sawchuk points out that the concept of Aboriginal title is a European one that has been accepted by Metis and Natives only because it is useful in the new society, not because it is rooted in Native tradition. Sawchuk's analysis also calls Flanagan's conclusions into question by noting that the Metis were included in the treaty process in Ontario, particularly Treaty No. Three. The differences between Flanagan and Sawchuk are in the interpretations of the Manitoba Act. Sawchuk sees Section 31 as acknowledging Native title; Flanagan sees it as a

political expedient. However, Flanagan notes that Riel wanted to have the Metis dealt with by the federal government as a nation, not as individuals. Sawchuk comes closer to Flanagan in his careful outline of how the Metis became increasingly subordinate to the Native treaty process. Aboriginal title had to be extinguished first, and only then could the Metis be offered Crown land to extinguish whatever rights they might have.<sup>31</sup>

The real debate in land claims is between Sprague and Flanagan. Sprague argues that the federal government conspired to deny the Metis their rights under the Manitoba Act. He contends that the "introduction of the Manitoba Act was duplicitous" and that the Metis were deliberately dispossessed and dispersed.<sup>32</sup> Most historians do not agree with Sprague. Flanagan argues that the federal government generally fulfilled and possibly over-fulfilled the land provision of the Manitoba Act. Flanagan provides evidence that Metis families generally did extremely well, particularly with the lands allotted to Metis children. He accuses Sprague of being guilty of the historical crime of "animism" or "anthropomorphism," ascribing human qualities to the federal government as a whole. Sprague sees a "government conspiracy." Flanagan argues that there was neither an overall conspiracy nor a single government mind set. Metis lands were handled by a number of bureaucrats, who often worked in isolation to each other. Each responded to unique circumstances.

Flanagan admits, as has Sprague, that the question of the Manitoba lands centres on whether the Metis could make informed choices on whether to stay or to sell. Sprague maintains that many of the Metis left because of racial prejudice and the pressure of speculators. Flanagan argues that the federal government was caught in a dilemma. Since the Metis did not want to be treated paternalistically, the government issued land either in money scrip or land scrip, an act that, in turn, opened the door to speculation. Flanagan claims that the Metis made individual decisions based on what was best for them economically at the time the scrip was issued.

Metis leaders do not agree with Flanagan's findings. The Metis Association of Alberta argues that Metis claims will have to be settled by the courts. Issues surrounding individual money scrip and land scrip rights will have to be dealt with. Metis leaders argue that extinguishing individual rights with payment of scrip did not and does not extinguish national rights. They contend that scrip was designed to benefit the speculator, not the Metis and the federal government was guilty of breach of trust. The Metis argue that the extinguishment of their Aboriginal rights was not compensated for by scrip. A major point to be explored is that the ending of Metis Aboriginal rights was imposed by Order in Council and Statute, not by negotiation. The Metis could be construed to be Indians under the terms of the British North America Act and are entitled to the same rights as Indians. As well, Metis rights were recognised by the Manitoba Act and by the various

Dominion Lands Acts and these rights were never fully extinguished. As a nation, the Metis argue that they have the right to negotiate directly with federal government but the Canadian Government refused to recognize the political and national identity of the Metis in 1870. The courts must decide on these issues concerning the human and national rights of the Metis.<sup>33</sup>

As land issues are resolved, and they eventually will be, cultural issues will become of greater concern to the Metis and to the scholars involved in their interpretation. This has already started to happen, but the issues tend to focus too much on the character of Louis Riel. The persistence and nature of Metis culture, family life and gender relations will become increasingly of interest. There are signs this is already starting to happen.

### **Women, Gender, and the Metis**

Generally mainstream historians like Morton, Giraud, Stanley, Flanagan, and even Sprague have all worked within a context in which men created the issues that were important to history. Issues such as child-rearing, gender, ageing or patterns of life were not addressed. The impact of the industrial colonisation of the Canadian West on women, and more importantly, on Native women was simply not an issue. The role of women in forming mixed-blood communities and Metis identity is currently an important area of study. Another area being explored is the role of the churches, education, and racism in contributing to the changing role of Metis women.

Only in the 1970s with the work of Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer Brown did the history of the mixed-blood women and mixed-blood families become a legitimate focus of historical scholarship. Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties* and Brown's *Strangers in Blood*<sup>34</sup> were published first as fur trade studies, and secondarily as contributions to native studies and women's history. Brown's most important point, other than her analysis of fur trade marriages, is her discussion of the role of women in forging a distinctive identity in her article "Women as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Metis Communities." Brown argues that some Metis men attached a special importance to their maternal ancestry. Brown observes that the daughters born to European fur traders and their Indian wives were more likely to marry and stay in the West than were the sons born to these couples. The sons tended to go to England or Montreal to be educated. Brown observes that newly married couples tended to live with the wives' relations for a period of time.<sup>35</sup> Brown asks several important questions that historians would be wise to consider in their future research. Did Metis women maintain the matrilineal tendency of their mothers in their own marriages? How important were the daughters who stayed behind in the interior? What impact did the absence of fathers and young men have on family structure?



Sylvia Van Kirk in her article on the well documented English speaking mixed-blood Alexander Ross family of Red River observes the opposite that the male, not the female, had the greatest impact on a family's choice of identities. She notes that in the Ross family, the mother's influence in the family particularly on its choice of identity was marginal. The father made the critical cultural decisions. This observation may well be subject to interpretation in the near future. It can be argued that Van Kirk was captive of letters by those trying to emulate a "patriarchal" and "Imperial" culture.<sup>36</sup> On this question readers should also consult John Foster's "Wintering, the Outside Adult Male and Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis."<sup>37</sup>

Diane Payment's and Natalie Kermoal's articles "La Vie en Rose"<sup>38</sup> and "Les Rôles et les souffrances des femmes métisse lors de la Résistance de 1870 et de la Rébellion de 1885"<sup>39</sup> are key to an understanding of the new emerging discussions on such issues as the impact of the Church on the position of Metis women, the impact of racism on the status of women, and the impact of the events of 1869 and 1885. Kermoal sees Metis women as passive participants. Their role was private, one of keeping the family intact and providing domestic support for the political or public activities of their men. Women were subordinate, suffering within the confines of a world controlled by men. She sees little change in women's status between 1869 and 1885. Diane Payment, using Batoche as an example, argues that the persistence and survival of the Metis is due equally to the Metis men and women. She makes particularly interesting observations about the role of women in securing compensation for losses incurred during the rebellion. Payment also emphasises that there was change from 1869 to 1885. Payment recognises the growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church, which encouraged the subordination of women. However, she points out that while the Catholic Church saw the family as a patriarchy in which women had the nurturing, child rearing and domestic roles, after 1885 there was a growing sisterhood amongst Metis women. Particularly with the expulsion of their men folk following 1885, they experienced their struggles as a group, met with one another socially, and supported each other through their trials. According to Payment, Metis women believed they were equal to men, even if Euro-Canadians did not.

While Metis women's history is still in its infancy and has many themes that need to be explored, insights can be gleaned from the contemporary writings of Metis women. Amongst the best is Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*.<sup>40</sup> This autobiography is an intensely personal story of Campbell's struggle against prejudice and poverty, and her ultimate discovery of herself.



## Conclusion

Where Metis studies will head in the next decades is not certain. However, an examination of the recently completed dissertations in the social sciences and humanities gives us some idea where scholarship might turn. The preponderant interest, particularly of scholars in American institutions, would seem to focus on issues of identity, and the interplay of gender, race and class. Lucy E. Murphy's "Economy, Race and Gender Along the Fox-Wisconsin and Rock Riverways, 1737-1832,"<sup>41</sup> examines a northern borderland region's economy during the gradual transition from Indian and Metis to white hegemony through the filters of race, ethnicity and gender. Melinda M. Jette, "'Ordinary Lives': Three Generations of a French-Indian Family in Oregon, 1827-1931,"<sup>42</sup> argues that individual circumstances determined how three generations of her family adapted from fur trade to urban life.

There is a continued interest in childhood, first established in Canada by Brown and Van Kirk. Juliet T. Pollard's, "The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender,"<sup>43</sup> albeit an earlier thesis, argues that much can be determined about the historical process by the investigation of childhood experiences, which shape the lives of the next generation of adults. Pollard's examination of the contours of class, race and gender on the Metis children at Fort Vancouver, during from 1800 to 1850, years of rapid social change, determines that most children, rather than becoming "victims of 'higher civilization,'" became successful member of the dominant Euro-American culture. Elizabeth Scott, "'Such Diet as Befitted His Station as Clerk': The Archaeology of Subsistence and Cultural Diversity at Fort Michilimackinac, 1761-1781,"<sup>44</sup> examines cultural remains to determine how the interplay of environment, socio economic position, ethnicity and gender might have accentuated or muted differences amongst the French, English, mixed-bloods and natives at Michilimackinac. Scott finds that the subsistence patterns at the site at once reflected and reinforced social and economic differences. Brad Jarvis's "A Woman Much to be Respected: Madeline LaFramboise and the Redefinition of a Metis Identity,"<sup>45</sup> argues that LaFramboise constructed her identity in nineteenth century Mackinaw to maximize her economic and social status in the various ethnic groups comprising her society. However, the best of the dissertations undertaken at American institutions relates to contemporary issues of Metis identity. Evelyn I. Legare "Nobody Speaks for the Nation Anymore: Canada's Problems with Itself,"<sup>46</sup> argues that Canadian nationalism "represents real Canadians as a culturally unmarked citizens." Within this identity the Metis are allowed a subordinate role within but not as full members of the Canadian nation—they are not "real" Canadians.

The scholarly interests at Canadian institutions tends to be more diffuse, although the debates of the 1980s and 1990s still seem to grip the historiog-

raphy with little relief in sight. John Frederick Shore's "The Canadians and the Metis: The Re-Creation of Manitoba 1858-1872,"<sup>47</sup> argues that the use of the Red River Expeditionary Force by the new Ontario elite marginalized the Metis position in Manitoba. He argues that the Metis had managed to gain political hegemony during the 1860s to the point where they dominated the politics of the new province. However the intimidation tactics employed by the Force soon ensured that this position soon ended to allow for the dominance of the new Ontarians. Margaret Louise Clarke's "Reconstituting the Fur Trade Community of the Assiniboine Basin, 1793 to 1812,"<sup>48</sup> positions itself within the Spry-Pannekoek debates on the nature of the divisions between the English and French speaking mixed-bloods. She found that geographic location more than ethnicity was the key determinant in intermarriage.

There is evidence as well that Metis studies will move increasingly beyond Red River in the next decades. Paul Thistle, in "The Twatt Family, 1780-1840: Amerindian, Ethnic Category, or Ethnic Group Identity?"<sup>49</sup> studies the mixed-bloods of the lower Saskatchewan River to determine whether their identities were self-formed or formed by external perceptions.

The issues of land is a greater issue generally in Canadian historiography than American. One of the more interesting studies on land issues from an Aboriginal perspective is Elmer Nelson Ghostkeeper's "'Spirit Gifting': The Concept of Spiritual Exchange,"<sup>50</sup> which describes the impact of changing Metis attitudes in Paddle Prairie towards the land from one based on a spiritual values in the early 1960s to one based on commercial values in the late 1970s. The interest by Ruth Swan on border Metis,<sup>51</sup> and that by Heather Devine on transborder families and the factors shaping identity is more indicative of recent scholarship, and is comparable in scope to that undertaken by their American counterparts.

Some of the best new scholarship is in political history. If these become base line studies there is great promise of the Metis beginning to realize the power of historical agency. Laurie Meijer Drees, "History of the Indian Association of Alberta, 1939-1959,"<sup>52</sup> argues that while to date historiography has suggested that Aboriginal (including Metis) involvement in WWII precipitated political action, in fact it was prewar concerns over land, hunting and fishing rights, education and health that were the real root. While the dissertation accepts Metis agency, it also argues that non-Native support was critical in determining the nature of political action. Another valuable contribution to the understanding of Metis politics is Shannon M. Avison's "Aboriginal Newspapers: Their Contribution to the Emergence of an Alternative Public Sphere in Canada,"<sup>53</sup> that determines that while Metis and native newspapers did establish an alternate arena for

political and social debate, its effectiveness was circumscribed by its government funders.

There is an increasing interest in cultural issues particularly in literature, music and material culture. In "Case Study: Bob Boyer the Artist,"<sup>54</sup> Barbara E. Pritchard explored the traditional Metis roots of Bob Boyer's art from 1971 to the present. This exploration of cultural traditions carries much hope. Annette Chretien's, "Mattawa, Where the Waters Meet: The Question of Identity in Metis Culture,"<sup>55</sup> examines music as evidence of identity. She argues that music provides evidence that there are "multiple" Metis identities based on class, geography and language. Karl Neuenfeldt, "First Nations and Metis Songs as Identity Narratives,"<sup>56</sup> studies Metis popular songs and argues that they have a critical role in both creating and reinforcing identities. Blending both traditional music and Riel's historic writings, Normand Guilbeault has produced a musical on Riel, based on Metis uprisings in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, entitled *Riel Plaidoyer musical / Musical Plea*.<sup>57</sup> Joan Reid Acland, "The Native Artistic Subject and National Identity: A Cultural Analysis of the Architecture of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Designed by Douglas J. Cardinal,"<sup>58</sup> is an intriguing work that attempts to determine the interplay between Cardinal, his Aboriginal heritage, his building and his nation in a post colonial and post modern environment.

If there is an exciting future that continues to be still relatively unexplored is the interdisciplinary and comparative study of mixed-blood peoples, although there are important forays into the field. Perhaps it is here we will find new insights for the future. One example is Laura Caso Barrera, "The Canadian Metis and the Mexican Maya as a Cross Cultural Study of Native Land Struggles."<sup>59</sup> This comparative research on the Maya Caste War of Yucatan (1847-1901) and the Riel Rebellions (1869-1885) attempts to demonstrate that the rebellions were both efforts to preserve indigenous social organization and autonomy in the face external pressures.

As Metis studies continue their focus on cultural and political identities, there will be attempts by "main stream" historians like Gerald Friesen, in for example the earlier cited "Labour History and the Metis" to place Metis studies within the context of larger Canadian historiographical concerns, in this case the history of the left. However, if those who completed their recent dissertations and theses continue to publish in the refereed literature, it is very likely that the focus will continue to be on the issues relating to identity formation. This will steer debate, and future research, and even determine the direction taken by generational and gender concerns of an increasing number of Metis scholars. The major research gaps that continue to exist are in the period from 1900 to 1950, the decades in which the roots of today's politics, culture and identity were formed. It will be in these

decades, rather than the "Genesis" fur trade years, that today's Metis will find the roots of the issues most relevant to them today. It is also in these years that today's Metis will find the traditions for their current leadership and themselves. And never forget the pain that some Metis continue to go through as they discover their heritage. This pain will continue to produce great pieces of Canadian literature like Gregory Schofield, *Thunder Through My Veins Memories of a Metis Childhood*.<sup>60</sup>

## Notes

1. Jennifer Brown, "People of Myth, People of History: A look at Recent Writings on the Metis," *Acadiensis* XVII (Autumn 1987): 150-63; Dennis F.K. Madill, "Riel, Red River and Beyond: New Developments in Metis History," in Colin G. Calloway, ed., *New Directions in American Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 19-78; Gerald Friesen, "Labour History and the Metis," in Gerald Friesen, ed., *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 79-89.
2. See W.L. Morton's extensive introductions to two set of published documents: *Eden Colville's Letters*, edited by E.E. Rich (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956), and *Red River Journal and other papers relative to the Red River resistance of 1869-70*, by Alexander Begg (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956). Marcel Giraud, *The Metis in the Canadian West*, 2 vols., translated by George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986). Originally published in French in 1945. George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), originally published in 1936.
3. See John E. Foster, "The Indian Trader in the Hudson Bay Fur Trade Tradition," in Jim Freedman and J.H. Barkow, eds., *Proceedings of the Second Congress, Canadian Ethnology Society* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1976); John E. Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian West," in L.H. Thomas, ed., *Essays on Western History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976); John E. Foster, "The Métis: The People and the Term," *Prairie Forum* 3, no. 1 (1978); John E. Foster, "The Plains Métis," in Bruce Morrison and C.R. Wilson, eds., *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986); John E. Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," *Prairie Forum* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1994). (Also included in this book as Chapter 8.)
4. See Jacqueline Peterson, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Metis," *Ethnohistory* 25 (Winter 1978): 41-67; "Ethnogenesis: Settlement and Growth of a New People in the Great Lakes Region, 1702-1815," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6, no. 2 (1982): 23-64; Tanis Thorne, *The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996); Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Furs and Female Kin Networks: The World of Marie Madeleine Réaume 'Larchevêque Chevalier,'" in Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and William Wicken, eds., *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the*

- Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 53–72; Keith R. Widdén, *Battle For the Soul: Métis Children Encounter Evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw Mission, 1823–1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999).
5. John E. Foster, "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problems of Metis Roots," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 73–87.
6. Trudy Nicks, "Mary Anne's Dilemma: The Ethnohistory of an Ambivalent Identity," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XII, no. 2 (1985): 103–14.
7. Peter Bakker, *A Language of Our Own: The Genesis of Michif, the mixed Cree-French Language of the Canadian Métis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
8. David Boisvert, David and Keith Turnbull. "Who are the Metis?" *Studies in Political Economy* 18 (Autumn 1985): 107–45.
9. Olive Patricia Dickason, "'From One Nation' in the Northeast to 'New Nation' in the Northwest: A Look at the Emergence of the Metis," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 19–36.
10. Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River; Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680–1815," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 37–71.
11. Verne Dusenberry, "Waiting for a Day That Never Comes: The Dispossessed Metis of Montana," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 119–36.
12. More recent work on the marginalization of the American Metis includes: Gregory Scott Camp, "The Turtle Mountain Plains Chippewa and Metis, 1797–1935" (Ph.D., University of New Mexico, 1987); Gerhard J. Ens, "After the Buffalo: The Reformation of the Turtle Mountain Métis Community, 1879–1905," in Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and William Wicken, eds., *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected Papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1995* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 139–52.
13. Lyle Dick, "The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1870," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2 (1992): 91–112.
14. Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
15. Irene Spry, "The Tragedy of the Loss of the Commons in Western Canada," in A.L. Gerry and Antoine S. Lussier, eds., *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983).
16. Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1991).
17. Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": *Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).
18. George F.G. Stanley, gen. ed., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, 5 vols. Vol. I, 1861–1875, Raymond Huel; Vol. II, 1875–1884, Gilles Martel; Vol. III, 1884–1885, Thomas Flanagan, Vol. IV, *Poetry*, Glen Campbell; Vol. V, *Reference*, George F.G. Stanley, Thomas Flanagan, Claude Rocan (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985).



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20. W.L. Morton, "Introduction," to *Red River Journal and other papers relative to the Red River resistance of 1869-70*, by Alexander Begg (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956).
21. Irene Spry, "The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land Before 1870," in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).
22. George Woodcock, *Gabriel Dumont: The Metis Chief and His Lost World* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975).
23. Gerhard J. Ens, "Dispossession of Adaptation? Migration and Persistence of the Red River Metis, 1835-1890," *Historical Papers* 1988 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1988): 120-44. John E. Foster, "The Metis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta," *Alberta Studies in the Arts and Sciences* 3, no. 1 (1992): 61-77. (This article also appeared simultaneously in John Foster, Dick Harrison and Ian MacLaren, eds., *Buffalo*, Alberta Nature and Culture Series (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992).)
24. Diane Payment, *"The Free People—Otipemisiwak" Batoche, Saskatchewan 1870-1930* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, 1990).
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28. Murray Dobbin, *The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981).
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34. Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in the Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).
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